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MUSIC.

A REVIEW OF THE SEASON.

THE enthusiast who predicted, in October, an unusually brilliant winter season, must acknowledge himself disappointed now. The hard times have borne heavily upon most musical entertainments, and managers have been compelled to curtail expenses in a ratio at least equal and sometimes disproportionate to their receipts.

Some months ago we foreshadowed the policy of the opera, and commended the determination to cut down the enormous salaries of the soloists, and appropriate some part of the amount to the building up a large chorus, and to securing a proper presentation of the operas. We almost rejoiced in the departure of Nilsson with her thousand dollars a night in gold, and the sailing of Campanini with a price far beyond his deserts; for we had the assurance that thereafter we were to have an opera not redundant in stars of the first magnitude, but so well illuminated that the stars would not be missed, and that we would be dazzled by the diffused brilliancy of the combined galaxy. Certainly the public was ripe for this experiment. The intelligent musician was more than anxious to hear an opera presented with such equality in every part that all the minor characters and the chorus would at least serve to keep the hearer awake and carry him over the interregnum between the brilliant arias or concerted pieces of the famous and high-priced soli. The orchestra, too, was to be greatly enlarged. There was the prospect of having on every part a complement of performers. There was to be no doubling of parts, and when the score read harp, there was to be no lame substitution of a thin piano or violins pizzicato. This was our expectation when we went to see the opening performance of the opera. And we were disappointed. There was no perceptible increase in the orchestra. We knew them all. Their faces are as familiar as the Cambridge catechism on which we were reared. If there were any additions, they must have been on leave of absence. Still, the number was large and perhaps sufficient, so we contented ourselves with the expectation that the increase would be found in the chorus. The curtain rose, and verily it disclosed the old time-honored assemblage. We recognized the girl in the red hair; we convinced ourselves as to the identity of the fat dame who always insists on low necks and eliminated skirts; we identified the bow-legged tenor without difficulty, and with these as a *point d'appui*, we found it easy to recall all the rest as the same old *habitués* who have "done the choruses" by contract for the last fifteen years. They were neither more nor less, either in numbers or efficiency. So we fell back upon the soloists, and naturally enough we contrasted them with those who have gone. "Who have we," asked we, "with whom we shall compare Nilsson?" "Heilbron?" Nay, verily; she has a sweet, flexible voice, with brilliant execution, but devoid of the fire which characterized the fair Swede. "Albani?" No, not in all respects. She has a voice of telling sweetness; she manages it with exquisite delicacy, but when great dramatic fervor is demanded, Nilsson is far above her. In light, florid music of the Italian school, Albani is Nilsson's superior.

"Have we a worthy successor to Campanini?" No! Signor Carpi has a voice of some power, and of exceeding richness in the head register. But he lacks the delivery, the musical vim of Campanini, and he has not the love-making facility of the melodramatic Capoul.

"But what of Cary?"

Yes, happily we retain her, the noblest of the present company. An artist, conscious of her strength, but laboring incessantly to make greater progress and place herself on the topmost round of the ladder of musical fame. America may justly be proud of her. But two gifted singers, such as Albani and Cary, can not compensate for the failure to present the opera complete and rounded in every part, as was promised.

The new works brought out were "Ruy Blas" and Verdi's "Requiem Mass." The first will not maintain a place long in our operatic repertoire. It is light, and has some few airs of a popular character, but on the whole does not reach the accepted standard of the average opera attendant. The Mass is a fine work, but has little concern with the religious school of composition. It belongs to what some one has styled the "Ecclesiastical Opera," of which Rossini's "Stabat Mater" and "Messe Solennelle" are notable examples. It failed to attract, for opera-goers want the dress, the acting, the tinsel and glare of the stage, with its ever-changing scenes and excitements. There is nothing enlivening in a stiff chorus, built up in layers on the platform, with only two handsomely attired ladies (the principal soli) in the foreground to break the monotony—a twin-diamond pin, so to speak, on a black scarf. So people stayed away, and Manager Strakosch fulfilled his promise at the expense of his purse.

But we see in the result of this season nothing to shake our faith in our previous statement that the public will patronize an opera which is good all the way through—one that is well sustained in every part. The soloists were ample had they been well supported by a largely increased and well drilled chorus and orchestra.

The leading concerts have been those of the New York Philharmonic, Thomas's Symphony, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic. The old and time-honored New York Philharmonic Society, of which Carl Bergmann is still the accomplished conductor, has languished somewhat. For many years it had no successful competitor, and was therefore eagerly sought after both by musicians and the musically inclined, as well as that numerous herd who follow after whatever is fashionable. And there was a time when not to be an attendant at the Philharmonics was to be well nigh out of society.

This excellent orchestra has for several years past found a most active rival in Thomas's Symphony Concerts, and has labored under the very great disadvantage of not being able to give adequate attention to the production of new works or to the thoroughly finished rendering of either old or new. For the Society is not a unit for continual practice. Its individual members belong to the opera and theatrical orchestras, and are available for almost all musical performances, and hence their Philharmonic work is confined mainly, if not exclusively, to the one private and three public rehearsals which precede each concert. For this cause, their performances have fallen much behind those of the Symphony Concerts. These latter have added another feature

which tends to draw off from the Philharmonic—that is, one public rehearsal before each concert. The rehearsal is in name only, for the most thorough preparation is previously made, and the execution is as smooth as at the concert, and entirely free from the annoying interruptions incident to a genuine rehearsal. Despite the continued depression in business, the Symphony Concerts have been a greater success financially than ever before, and both the rehearsals and concerts are crowded with attentive and delighted listeners.

The Brooklyn Philharmonic has also met with unprecedented success. Theodore Thomas and his orchestra were re-engaged, and inasmuch as all the rehearsals are simply matinee concerts, the Academy is filled at every performance. This admirable orchestra is now without an equal in this country, yet we miss several of the old members whose loss is felt. Listemann, the leader of the violins, who has retired to pursue more energetically his practicing, is a solo artist of marked merit, and we miss him. So also Lubeck, the leading violoncellist, who was regarded by many as the equal of Bergner. The quality of tone he elicited from this most effective instrument we do not secure from his successor. But we do not doubt that Mr. Thomas, who is content only with the very best, and who will use every endeavor to maintain the supremacy of his orchestra, will fill these vacancies at the earliest moment possible, a matter not always easy of immediate accomplishment.

Of the many minor concerts there is space to make but brief mention. In Brooklyn a Glee and Madrigal Society, comprising many of the best vocalists of the Vocal Society of New York (unhappily suspended this season), was successfully organized, and promises to be a permanent and most valuable aid in the musical culture of the City of Churches. It is conducted by Michael H. Cross, the leading cathedral organist and choral director of Philadelphia.

The Handel and Haydn Society of Brooklyn and the Oratorio Society of New York, both under the direction of Dr. Leopold Damrosch, have also made rapid progress, and there is really some hope at last that from the several vocal organizations above named we may yet secure a society that will rival the famous Handel and Haydn of Boston.

Altogether the season has furnished enough music to keep the taste up to the standard; and if it has had a less number of complimentary church concerts and miscellaneous concerts of the common kind, the public is no worse off musically and much better off in pocket.

ART.

THE BROOKLYN ART ASSOCIATION PICTURES.

THE annual exhibition of the Brooklyn Art Association opened at the Association Building and the Academy of Music, on Monday evening, 30th November, with an attendance equally numerous, fashionable, and marked by its wealth of rare female beauty—perhaps nothing especial for Brooklyn, but certainly for that occasion taking away from the charm of the pictures on the walls, by the brilliancy of those living pictures (or were a part of them statues?) from the hand of the Divine Artist. The exhibition closed on 12th of December, after a fortnight of somewhat exceptional success in attendance and appreciation. Though now a thing of the past, we speak of the pictures as in the present, rapidly running down the catalogue, without any attempt at grouping, and not pretending to do justice to more than a portion of those really worth comment.

If marine battle-pieces are to be painted at all (a fact which deserves question, as they dazzle the eye with red fire and vitiate the pencils of nearly all the artists who attempt them), then De Haas, in "Farragut's Fleet Passing the Forts at New Orleans" (No. 1), has painted a creditable picture, as it is certainly a careful and forcible one. It should go to the National Capitol, where, and nowhere else, such scenes may fitly be kept before the public eye; and it is quite worthy of any artistic company to be found there. Healey's "Peace-Makers" (No. 2) is ambitious and negative. "The Arch of Constantine" (No. 3), announced as the joint work of Church, McEntee and Healey, is simply very bad—we do not remember to have seen a less graceful or less pleasing picture, in grouping and management, in many a long year. The "King Henry VIII. and Cardinal Wolsey" (No. 4), by Pott, of London, already exhibited at a house on Broadway, is an admirable picture in every regard—characterization and color being alike commendable. "Porch of the Jesuit College, Rome" (No. 5), by Jusquet, is markedly fine in color and very appropriate and careful in architectural drawing. Arthur Parton's "Adirondacks and Lake Champlain" (No. 6) is in the best manner of that true delineator of lake-and-mountain scenery. "The First Quarter of the Honeymoon" (No. 8), by C. L. Muller, is happy in conception; free, and perhaps a trifle coarse, in handling; and excellent in color. S. R. Gifford's "San Giorgio, Venice" (No. 9) has the exaggerated coloring of all this artist's Venetian pictures; but, that fact conceded, is an elaborate and pleasing picture of a point in the scenery of the Lagoon not often attempted. "Au Sable River, Adirondacks" (No. 18), by C. D. Hunt, demands notice for careful study of nature and free rendering. "Prayer" (No. 28), by M. J. Wood, is a cabinet picture of merit, the kneeling figure pleasingly drawn, and the drapery especially notable in finish. "Palisades opposite Hastings" (No. 33), by F. Rondel, is one of the best elaborations we remember of those rarest rock-bulwarks of the Middle States. "On the Housatonic" (No. 37), by James M. Hart, is a creditable example of this artist's well-known style, though by no means among his best pictures. "Early Spring, near Munich" (No. 40), by R. L. Delisser, is a somewhat remarkable instance of the production of fine effects by mechanism apparently of the coarsest. "Portraits" (Nos. 46 and 47), by Aug. Young, are two of those pictures leaving the spectator in doubt whether the worst fault lies with the artist, or his subject. "An English Roadside" (No. 49), by Wm. R. Miller, conveys the very atmosphere of the scene most pleasingly. "Swabian Peasants Dancing" (No. 58), by Vautier, is at once spirited in grouping and elaborate in detail—perhaps the best picture in the collection. "Sunset, Passamaquoddy" (No. 63), and "After a Fog" (No. 64), both by J. C. Nicoll, display close study and easy manner.

"The Goat-Race" (No. 67), by S. S. Carr, is a most pleasing picture, and gives high promise of more works in that popular line of semi-caricature. "Ariel" (No. 75), a little work by Corinne Sinnett, has much grace and exquisite feeling of the dainty subject, though it may be objected that Puck is too large for his flowers, and can not by any possibility "lie in the bell" of a flower which would almost go into his own tiny pocket if he happened to own such a convenience. "Fox-Hunt" (No. 94), by Maffei, is very free in drawing, and would be a fine picture in any country where the foxes chanced to be considerably larger than the dogs. "Coast Scene" (No. 81) and "Lying-to in a Gale" (No. 82—water-color), both by C. T. Lippitt, are highly creditable pictures, the latter especially displaying rare power. "Chatsworth" (No. 107) by T. Addison Richards, admirably conveys that more than regal palace and its surroundings, though too small for the subject. "The Truants" (No. 141), by Constant Mayer, is stiff in grouping, and though better in background than some of his early compositions, marks no advance if not a decadence in power. "Stormy Weather, New York Bay" (No. 152) and "Lifting the Pound" (No. 153) are admirable examples, in very different styles, of Edward Moran. "Off Mount Desert" (No. 156) and "Off Isle of Shoals" (No. 157), both by De Haas, are forcible illustrations of his close sea-coast study and thorough familiarity with water in motion. "Night" and "Day" (Nos. 167 and 168) are two Doréish and excellent panel decorations, by J. C. Thom, who has also a pleasant little picture, in "Amusing the Baby" (No. 160). "Brook Study" (No. 202), by David Johnson, is one of the very best elaborations of that true artist, who has also, in "Spring" (No. 203), shown exquisite taste in carrying away the eye, with the glimmer on the white inclosure, from the glare of his bloom-overloaded apple-trees. "Lake George" (No. 206) is an admirable specimen of the lake work of Casilear: no other words are needed. "Portrait" (No. 221), by Ferd. T. L. Boyle, is a fine picture of a fine head. "The Wreck" (No. 237), by F. A. Silva, is one of the strongest coast-scenes yet produced by this enamored lover of beaches and sea-sands. "Amsteg, St. Gothard Pass" (No. 238), by Clinton Ogilvie, is a strong and forcible rendering of a wild subject. "Shall I Ring?" (No. 252), by F. Minor, Munich, is in all regards a pleasing picture, and perhaps tells its story better than any other in the collection. "An October Day on Lake Placid" (No. 257) is a most enjoyable dalliance with gorgeous coloring, by S. M. Barstow. "Portrait" (No. 267), by William Kelly, is a fine Rembrandtish head, nobly painted. "Beach at Scheveningen, Holland" (No. 268); and "Sandgate, England" (No. 269), are two coast-scenes displaying more of the infinite variety of De Haas. "Young Cattle, Granby Meadows" (No. 277), by Shattuck, may claim to be among the best of American cattle-pieces. "Perfectly Carried Away" (No. 291) and "Grandma, See Kitty!" (No. 292), are two charming little cabinet-bits, by C. C. Markham. "Bernardino" (No. 300), by Walter Satterlee, is almost bright and saucy enough for one of the pet beggars of Murillo. "Waiting at the Gate" (No. 307) is a careful rendering of a snow-scene, with a veritable shivering atmosphere, by T. L. Smith. "Harvest-Time" (No. 308), by Edward Gay, has an admirably painted summer foreground, of which the background is by no means worthy. "Wearied with Affairs of State" (No. 324), by Walter Satterlee, is a careful painting, in some Richelieuian position, of a man who has never owned enough brains to recognize a care of any character. "Power" (No. 325), by Boutelle, is ingenious, but a waste of that very quality, and more an experiment than a picture. "Joy and Sorrow," "Too Timid," and "Too Bold" (Nos. 330, 331, and 332), are three pictures by Carl Hubner, of Dusseldorf, a guest at the exhibition on the opening evening; the two latter companion-pieces, and well worthy of his reputation, the first named inferior to the others and not creditable to its origin. "Peaceful Homes" (No. 338), by James M. Hart, though in many regards a pleasing picture, covers more canvas than is well employed, and is another of Mr. Hart's efforts not deserving to rank among his best productions. "Returning to the Fold" (No. 354), by Chas. H. Miller, is an admirable picture of falling twilight; and a few permissible tints of white on his sheep, toning up that portion of the composition, and better carrying out the name, would have made it his very best work and the gem of the whole. "A Christmas Eve, Italy" (No. 355), by W. Whittridge, has a fine management of interior light coming out on the night, from the church door, and is a work of Dusseldorfish merit; and "Camp-Meeting" (No. 357), by the same artist, is a life-like and almost pleasing handling of a most ungraceful subject. "Off Shore at Evening" (No. 371), by W. T. Richards, has many features of excellence, in atmosphere and general effect, but unaccountably seems to be off the level and accordingly impossible. "After the Bath" (No. 376), by Bougereau, is a gem of art in execution, but shows too obvious a difference of race between the supposed mother and child, not to awake a feeling of incongruity. "Italian Beggar-Singers" (No. 382), by Defregger, tells the sad story of the blind and the mendicant most sweetly. "Snow-Scene in the Tyrol" (No. 383), by Richard Zimmermann, is the very apotheosis of snow. "A New Pair of Shoes" (No. 384), by Adam Eckler, is full of spirit and character. "The Pet Rabbit" and "The Sleeping Cupid" (Nos. 385 and 386), by Wm. H. Baker, are two gems of cabinet painting, deserving the highest praise for both design and execution. "Sunset on the Plains" (No. 390), by Bierstadt, conveys the features of that mid-continent phenomenon with fidelity, though with less than the usual freedom of the artist. "The Wreckers" (No. 391) is one of W. H. Beard's pleasant satires, showing careful and faithful work—the subjects in this instance being a group of sea-shore crows looking out for their booty. "Chapel Hill, Adirondacks" (No. 392) gives us one more enjoyable glimpse of that wondrous woodland pencil of President Durand. "Albert Durer's House, Nuremberg" (No. 397) is an acceptable little result of Mrs. Greatorex's laborious residence abroad; and "Twilight" (No. 406) is an approximate mastering of the greatest problem in all art—seeing through the dusk—by F. E. Church.

We have only left ourselves room to say that there were in the exhibition many very creditable pictures from the Packer Institute, the Polytechnic, and a few from the Adelphi Academy; speaking highly of art education in Brooklyn. This promise for the future of the city is proper as well as gratifying, so rapidly are excellent artists becoming residents, and so certainly will it eventually rank high among the art centres.